

Remarks at a Democratic Senate Campaign Committee Dinner in Boston, Massachusetts

October 20, 2000

When we were in Lowell—first of all, I told Tom Daschle, I said, “Don’t you think it’s amazing Ted Kennedy knows every town I have been to in Massachusetts—[laughter]—since I ran for President in 1992?” And at Lowell, he went through every single place, every single stop I had made in 8 years. I didn’t remember all the places. [Laughter]

I asked Tom Daschle, I said, “Do you remember every town in South Dakota I’ve been to?” He said, “Yes, Sioux Falls.” [Laughter] And I make a lot of fun of Senator Kennedy, and he makes a lot of fun of me, and our families have become close. We’ve had some wonderful times together. But he’s going to get his revenge in the end. And as I tell everybody, you know, I was in junior high school when Ted Kennedy went to the Senate. [Laughter] But when I leave the White House, he will still be there. Thank God for that, I must say. [Laughter]

I love all these folks that were here tonight. Senator Reed I see is still back there. And Senator Daschle has been a magnificent leader. I talked to Senator Kerry. I know that he had a gathering to talk about technology to the Democratic Party tonight, and I saw the Senators who were here earlier. But one of the things I’m going to miss most about being President is the time I’ve had to work with them and the friendships I’ve made with them. One of the things I look forward to most, if the good people of New York send Hillary to the Senate, is, I also get to hang around with them. [Laughter] I will still be the object of their occasional abuse, but I’ll be able to leave it when I want to. [Laughter]

You know, it’s really not fair for Ted to talk about Tom Daschle that way on the 22d amendment, because I can promise you that the guys that lead the Senate in the other party will be very glad to see me go. [Laughter]

But we’ve had a great time together. And I know everybody else has talked. I just want to make a couple of very brief points. One is about politics, but the other, more impor-

tantly, is about the long-term direction of the country.

I’ve always felt that Al Gore would win this election, and I still do. I have never wavered in that. When he was 18 points behind a year ago, I kept telling everybody, just relax, go on. And I went around here—Alan will verify that—he had all these events, and we were waving the flag, and I believe that for two simple reasons.

One is, the issue before the American people is not whether the country will change, so it’s not change versus the status quo. The country is changing. America is changing. The world’s changing. The issue is, what kind of change and whether we should keep changing in the right direction or go back and try what we tried for 12 years before. It didn’t work out very well for us. It may be packaged a little differently, but it’s basically the same deal. And I think people will get that in the end. I think the undecided voters will come to terms with that and decide they want to keep the prosperity going, they want to—and they want to keep doing what works.

The second reason is, I think that they will decide that we have a more unifying vision of our country, our relationship to the world, and our future, and they will want to embrace it. And that will happen. That’s what I think is going to happen.

But in order for that to happen, we have to clarify the differences. And in order for that not to happen, they have to blur the differences. And that really explains more than any other kind of psychobabble I’ve read the different strategies of the two candidates in the debates.

You know, I read all that stuff. Most of it’s just—everybody’s got to say something. [Laughter] But the truth is that—and it’s harder for us than it is for them. It’s a lot easier—it’s easier to muddy things up than it is to clarify them.

But you watch this thing unfold now the last 3 weeks, and you remember what I told you. Clarity is our friend. Cloudiness is their friend, right? So we had—just go through the last debate. We wanted clarity on a Patients’ Bill of Rights, and they didn’t, because if there’s clarity, we win. We want clarity on

the difference on the Medicare drug program, and they don't, because if there's clarity, we win.

And so I think that that's something you should all keep in mind. And to whatever extent any of you can influence anybody anywhere in any State that's still up for grabs one way or the other, that's really worth doing.

And I know that this has already been said, but I just want to give just you two examples, if I might. This economic issue is very serious. People ask me all the time. I was with a bunch of people last night who identified themselves as friends of Bob Rubin, and they were telling me how great Bob Rubin was. We were up in Connecticut, had a deal for Hillary. It reminded me that people come up to me from time to time and they say, "What did you guys do, really, in the economy?"

By the way, I thought Al Gore's best line in the first debate was, the economic line when—George Bush actually had a good line. He said, you know, "I think Clinton/Gore got more out of the economy than the economy got out of Clinton/Gore." That's pretty cute, isn't it? I mean, I thought that was pretty good. *[Laughter]* Because he said the American people did that. Now, this is from—their crowd took credit when the Sun came up in the morning when they were in. Do you remember that? "It's morning in America. Reelect us." I mean, they did. They took credit for the Sun coming up in the morning. It was unbelievable. *[Laughter]* And then they—but everything else, once they got out, it all was an accident. *[Laughter]*

So he said that. He said it was really the hard work of the American people and we just sort of were along for the ride, and Al Gore said, "You know, the American people do deserve most of the credit for this, but they were working real hard in 1992, also." But I thought it was—see, that's clarity. That's good.

But—so people ask me all the time, "Well, what did you and Rubin and Lloyd Bentsen and all, what did you do? What new great idea did you bring to Washington?" And I always say, "Arithmetic." *[Laughter]* You know, I mean, here I am in the shadow of

Harvard. I hate to say anything so pedestrian—*[laughter]*—and mundane, but that's basically what it was. It was arithmetic, you know.

I just—I thought 2 and 2 still made 4 even in the digital age. Now, I'm not kidding. I am not kidding. I believed that fiscal conservatism would make social progressive's progress possible. That's what I believed. It turned out to be right. I thought if we got rid of the deficit and got interest rates down, the economy would boom; we would have the money to give modest tax cuts and invest in education and technology and the environment and health care and get rid of the deficit and eventually start paying the debt down.

Now, if I had come here 8 years ago and said, "Vote for me. By the time I leave office, we'll be paying down the national debt," you would have not voted for me. You would have said, "He's a very nice young man, but he's delusional, and we can't afford to have a delusional person as President, so"—*[laughter]*—"we'll send him home." Isn't that right? Nobody would have believed me if I had come here in 1992 and said, "Vote for me, and by the time I leave office, we'll be paying down the national debt. Vote for me, and by the time I leave office, the Democratic Party, Ted Kennedy, will be the fiscal conservative, and all the so-called conservatives in the Republican Party will be the radicals."

Now, that's what you've got here. And you know—so, you need to tell people this between now and November 7th. This is about arithmetic all over again. Yes, our tax cut is just a third of the size of theirs, and most of you would get a lot more out of theirs than ours.

But here's the problem. If you do ours, then you can invest the money into education and health care and still pay the country out of debt by 2012, which means that in a global economy where money is highly fungible and something like a trillion dollars crosses national borders every day, you can keep interest rates down and grow the economy.

It also means you can get rid of the third-biggest item in the Federal budget, by the way, which nobody ever talks about. Interest on the debt is the third-biggest item in the Federal budget, 12 cents of every dollar you

pay. It was about 14 cents when I took office, headed to 15 or 16. And we're paying the debt down.

But, now, this is arithmetic. So if—you know, there is a big debate about whether the projected surplus is \$1.8 trillion and \$2.2 trillion, and it sounds like a lot of money, and who can keep up with all of that? But it's still just simple arithmetic. Their tax cut's about \$1.5 trillion, conservatively. Their Social Security privatization program is a trillion dollars. They admitted that. Their nominee admitted that in the first debate. Their spending programs are already over \$300 billion, and they're lower than we are on defense and haven't said what Star Wars would cost yet. Now, you're back in deficit. This is arithmetic. And it means higher interest rates, and it means you don't free up money to invest, and it means the economy will be weaker. Everybody will get a tax cut.

In addition to the tax cut that the Vice President proposes, if interest rates are lower, and we reckon interest rates—the Council of Economic Advisers says interest rates will be about a point lower a year for a decade under the Gore plan. Do you know what that is? That's \$390 billion in lower home mortgages, \$30 billion in lower car payments, \$15 billion in lower student loan payments. It's also lower credit card payments, lower business loan payments, so that means every one of you in this room would benefit from it but so would all the people who served you tonight. It would be a big, huge, across-the-board tax cut that would keep the American economy strong. It is arithmetic. And every single American ought to understand if they want to keep this prosperity going in a global economy, we need to stay in harness with what works. We shouldn't be for no change, but we should be changing in the direction of what works.

The second point I want to make is, we have a different view of how we should relate to each other and the rest of the world. I think America is becoming a more and more interesting place as we become more racially and ethnically and religiously diverse. I think that—I think it's been a good thing for us that America is kind of coming to terms with the whole gay rights movement, and it's not something people have to hide anymore.

That's what I believe. A lot of people don't believe that, but I do. I think it's been good for us.

I think we—so we have to define what our responsibilities to one another are. Ted Kennedy and I earlier were with Marty Meehan—Congressman Meehan in Lowell. We have different ideas about the kinds of things we ought to do to bind each other together, and I'll just give you three or four. But every one of them, there is a big difference between our Presidential nominee and our party.

Campaign finance reform, I think, is a good example. You know, one reason we'll never get campaign finance reform is—no offense to the people that are covering this, but they have to say, "A plague on both your houses," because otherwise, they won't feel that they're doing the right thing. They've got to tell everybody none of the politicians are any good.

But the truth is, 100 percent of the Democrats in the Congress will vote for the Shays-Meehan-McCain-Feingold bill—every one of them. We've got them all. And we've got a majority in both Houses. And the reason we can't get it there is because the leadership of the other party in the Congress and in the race for the President are against it. Now, that is the truth.

Now, why are we for it? I enjoy coming to these dinners. If I were running, I would still be glad to have dinner, even if we could relieve you of the burden of financing the Democratic Party, because I'd learn something. But it's part of the idea of one America. It equalizes the power of people's votes. And that's important, so we're for it, and they're not. It's different.

Hate crimes legislation. You got that in the last debate, but they didn't go all the way. I wish that the moderator had actually fleshed out what the real issue was in the hate crimes bill. You just kind of saw them dancing around it. Look, when you strip it all away, here's the deal: We're for hate crimes legislation that includes protection against gays. Matthew Shepard got stretched on a rack and killed in Wyoming, and if there's a Federal hate crimes bill, it means the Federal Government can come in and help a severely financially strapped local law

enforcement jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute the crime. In other words, there is a serious, substantive law enforcement reason.

So to answer that—James Byrd’s killers are going to get executed, or something—it totally blows by the two big issues. Number one, the Republicans aren’t for it because it protects gays as well as racial and religious minorities and people with disabilities, and number two, they don’t recognize the legitimate Federal law enforcement issue here. So we’re for this hate crimes bill, and they’re not. That’s a big deal. I think it’s part of one America.

We’re for strengthening the equal pay laws to protect the women who do equal work and ought to get equal pay, and they’re not. It’s a huge deal, not just to women but to men who live with women who don’t get paid enough, and therefore, their family incomes are lower. It’s a big deal.

Now, those are just three issues, but they have a lot to say about who we are—the “Employment Non-Discrimination Act.” I could give you lots of other examples.

But my idea here has always been that we should be for two things: opportunity for every responsible citizen and a community of all Americans who are willing to play by the rules. If you have that, if you can create a structure of opportunity for every responsible citizen and a community of all Americans who play by the rules, you always fix the rest of it.

If we can build one America and the conditions and tools are there for people to do pretty well, the American people will figure out what to do with all these other problems. I mean, we could have a lot of esoteric arguments about the implication of the human genome project or how we’re going to protect the privacy of medical and financial records on the Internet. And I’ve got a lot of feelings about all that.

But I’m just telling you, the two big things we need are a system of opportunity for responsible people and a country where everybody counts, and we all do better when we help each other. That’s what I believe. And when you strip it all away, that’s why you ought to be for Al Gore and Joe Lieberman, and that’s why these people ought to be in

the majority in the U.S. Senate, and that’s why we’ve had some success in the last 8 years. That’s why we’ve had some success.

So I will just say to you what I say to everybody. This race is tight as Dick’s hatband, as we used to say at home. *[Laughter]* And it’s going to be, because they have more money than we do, and it’s easier to confuse than to clarify.

That’s really what’s going on here. I mean, you can get all these other explanations. I’m just telling you, I’ve been doing this a long time, and I’m not running for anything. *[Laughter]* This thing is tight because they’ve got more money than we do, and it’s easier to confuse than it is to clarify. So anything you can do, particularly with people who live in States like New Hampshire to the north, where we could win—and if we win, I think it would be the first time ever that a Democrat carried it three times in a row, I believe. I don’t think Roosevelt carried it three times in a row. But if you know anybody in any of these States—and one of you and I were talking about Louisiana tonight, a State I still believe we can win.

But in order to do it, we have to energize and clarify. People have got to understand this is a huge deal, and that’s the other point I should have made. In addition to this kind of favoring confusion, they’re also dramatically advantaged if most people feel sort of comfortable and think this doesn’t matter very much, because I can tell you, their right-wing is highly energized. They’re looking forward to getting off course and reversing our crime policy and reversing a lot of our other policies.

One of the specific commitments they’ve made is to reverse my order setting aside 43 million acres of roadless land in the national forests. That’s a specific commitment they’ve made. They’re going to reverse that. The Audubon Society says it’s the most significant conservation move in 40 years. So they’re really energized, because they know where the goodies are, and they know what the pay-off will be.

So you can’t let people think that this is not a significant election. And if you can just clarify the economic choice and the choices we make in order to be one nation, including those environmental things I mentioned, I

think it would make a great deal of difference. And you should not minimize your ability to have an impact on this election. Every one of you would talk to 200 people that never would come to an event like this, on their bet between now and the election—you may talk to 300 people. And clarity is our friend. If people understand the choices and the consequences, we win. If the decision is uncertain, then it's more difficult for us.

If you want to keep the prosperity going and you want to keep us coming together instead of being divided, you've got to be for Gore/Lieberman and our crowd of Senators here. And believe me, that's why I think we've had some success the last 8 years. And I really think it's a mistake to reverse the economic policy, the education policy, the health care policy, the environmental policy, the crime policy of this country.

It's not like we don't have a test run here. We've tried it our way; we've tried it their way. Things were better our way. They're just never deterred by evidence. I admire that about them. *[Laughter]* They're driven by ideology and the money, and they know what they believe, and the evidence is irrelevant. But it's not irrelevant to the voters that will determine the outcome of this election.

But you can help. In addition to your contributions, in addition to your presence here tonight, you ought to take it on yourself to turn some votes between now and November in the States that will make a difference. I'm telling you, you can do it. And just remember: Clarity is always harder than confusion, and therefore, we carry the burden. But we've also got, by far, the better side of the argument. So when you get away the clouds, we win.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:45 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to former Treasury Secretaries Robert E. Rubin and Lloyd Bentsen; and Republican Presidential candidate Gov. George W. Bush. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks at a Reception for Hillary Clinton in Indianapolis, Indiana

October 21, 2000

Thank you very much. Well, when Bren was up here talking, I thought to myself, that pretty well covers it, why should I speak? *[Laughter]* Thank you for your incredible generosity and support and friendship to me and to Hillary. And thank you, Mel. I want to thank Cindy and Paul for hosting this in their beautiful home in this beautiful yard. And I think I should say that today is Mel's 74th birthday, and we ought to be among the first to wish him a happy birthday.

You know, we're going to have to redefine our definition of aging, by the way. Anybody—today, Americans who live to be 65, on average, have a life expectancy of 82. Americans who live to be 74 have a life expectancy of over 85. And the fastest growing group of people by percentage in the whole country are Americans over 80. Pretty soon, because of the human genome project, young women will come home with babies from the hospital that will be born with a life expectancy of 90 years, which means that in the context of the 21st century, Mel is just entering middle age. *[Laughter]* And we wish you a long and happy life. *[Laughter]*

I want to thank my friend and supporter and Representative Julia Carson. I'm glad to be able to come back here and also do some events for her this morning. She is unbelievable in Congress. Everybody up there loves her. And she's—I told somebody that she may be an African-American woman, but she has the political skills of an Arkansas Ozark sheriff when she's working the Congress. *[Laughter]* She sort of sidles into a room. When she leaves she's got what she wants and nobody knows what they gave away until it's too late. *[Laughter]* It's great. Thank you, Julia Carson, for doing a great job.

And I want to thank Bart Peterson. I was so thrilled when he got elected, and I'm glad he and Amy are here today. And I want to say a personal word of appreciation to Frank and Judy O'Bannon. I have enjoyed my friendship with them. They have visited with Hillary and me at the White House. I want you to make sure that this election goes very